

Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide Hawaii

FOTG Introduction

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance to decision-makers to develop conservation plans that protect, maintain, and improve soil, water, air, plant, animal resources and related human considerations. A primary goal is to help each client attain a Resource Management System (RMS), a type of conservation system that meets or exceeds the quality criteria in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) for resource sustainability for all identified resource concerns for soil, water, air, plants and animals.

The FOTG is the primary technical reference for NRCS. It contains technical information about the conservation of soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. Field Office Technical Guides are maintained in each NRCS field office as a compilation of technical knowledge and standards.

The information contained in the FOTG helps planners guide agricultural producers (clients) through various steps of the NRCS 9-Step Planning Process as indicated in the following table.

NRCS 9-Step Planning Process		Applicable FOTG Section				
		I	II	III	IV	V
1	Identify Problems and Opportunities	X	X	X		X
2	Determine Objectives	X	X			
3	Inventory Resources	X	X	X	X	
4	Analyze Resource Data	X	X	X		X
5	Formulate Alternatives		X	X	X	X
6	Evaluate Alternatives	X	X	X	X	X
7	Make Decisions					X
8	Implement the Plan				X	
9	Evaluate the Plan	X	X	X	X	X

Following is a brief description of the information included in each of the five sections of the Field Office Technical Guide.

Section I - General Resource References

Section I lists references and other information for use in understanding natural resources of the field office service area or in making decisions about resource use and management systems. Section I includes the following sub-sections:

- A. Reference Lists** – Useful websites and subject reference lists.
- B. Cost Data** – Practice/Component Cost Lists for USDA Conservation Programs, cost of production data, and crop budgets.
- C. Maps** – Maps useful for conservation planning.

- D. Erosion Prediction** – Procedures for using the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) for making Highly Erodible Land Determinations and the Revised USLE.
- E. Laws** – Environmental laws, regulations, policy and documents affecting agricultural operations and conservation planning.

Section II – Natural Resources Information

Section II contains natural resource data, databases, and procedures for interpretation. This information is useful in making decisions about land use and management.

Section II sub-sections include:

- A. Soils Information**
- B. Climatic Data**
- C. Cultural Resources Information**
- D. Threatened and Endangered Species**
- E. Forage Suitability Groups**
- F. Ecological Site Descriptions**

Section III - Resource Management Systems and Quality Criteria

Section III includes quality criteria for treatment required to achieve a Resource Management System; examples of treatment alternatives, and conservations systems established for legislated programs. Section III includes the following sub-sections:

- A. Quality Criteria** – Includes quantitative or qualitative statements of the treatment level required to achieve a Resource Management System for identified resource considerations for a particular land use.
- B. Guidance Documents** – Provides examples of treatment alternatives common within the Field Office service area. They are used for information, training, and to support alternatives that are developed with producers during the planning process.
- C. Common Resource Areas** – Identifies geographical areas where resource concerns, problems, and treatment needs are similar. Landscape conditions, soil, climate, human considerations, and other natural resource information is used to determine the geographical boundaries of the common resource area.
- D. Legislated Programs** – Includes conservation systems established to meet levels of treatment defined by legislated programs.

Section IV - Practice Standards and Specifications

Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) contains conservation practice standards, specifications, jobsheets, and operation and maintenance guides applicable in Hawaii.

Conservation Practice Standards establish the minimum level of acceptable quality for planning, designing, installing, operating, and maintaining conservation practices. The Hawaii FOTG Section IV includes approximately 80 standards approved for use in Hawaii.

Conservation Practice Specifications establish the technical details, workmanship, and quality and extent of materials required to install a practice in accordance with the practice standard. Specifications are developed by each state to meet their unique needs.

In order to meet the requirements of the practice standards and specifications, **site-specific specifications** are prepared and given to the client. These are prescriptions for installing, operating, and maintaining a practice on a specific site. Site-specific specifications may be documented in jobsheets, engineering drawings and designs, operation and maintenance guides, and/or other appropriate documents.

Section V - Conservation Effects

This section includes information about the impacts conservation practices and systems have on natural resources and human considerations. Section V contains the following sub-sections:

V-A. Effects for RMS Formulation. This documents conservation effects information for use in building RMS guidance documents (Section III).

V-B. Effects for Decisionmaking. This section stores information about conservation effects gathered from on-farm studies or from other sources (e.g. conservation field trials, case studies, university research. etc.).

V-C. Procedural References includes NRCS procedural references used in the development of conservation practice physical effects worksheets and other guidance documents.

eFOTG

In consideration of recent e-government and Farm Bill 2002 initiatives, the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) was developed to provide Web access to materials included in Field Office Technical Guides throughout the United States. NRCS Hawaii is planning to load most of the material in our FOTG into eFOTG.

NRCS employees may currently access e-FOTG through the “my.NRCS” portal at:
<http://my.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Sometime late 2002, public access to eFOTG will be provided.

Information about using my.NRCS and eFOTG is included in Section I.A-2 of the FOTG.

The contents of the FOTG was developed based on policy and guidelines in the following documents:

- **General Manual Title 450 - Technology, Part 401 - Technical Guides**, which provides policy for FOTG contents. Available online at:
http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_450_401.htm
- **General Manual Title 180 – Conservation Planning, Part 409 – Conservation Planning Policy**. Available online at:
http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/gm_180_409.htm
- **National Planning Procedures Handbook** (NPPH) which provides procedures and guidance on implementing the Conservation Planning Policy, including relationships to the Field Office Technical Guide. Available online at:
http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/H/H_180_600.htm